# Guide to Writing Self Assessments Under the National Security Personnel System (NSPS)

For Spiral 1.2
HQMC Employees

Updated
04 August 2009

# What is the Purpose of Self Assessment?

The Employee Self Assessment is part of the NSPS Performance Appraisal process.  It is your opportunity to emphasize your performance accomplishments which contributed to the achievement of your organization's mission and goals.

You will be requested to submit a self assessment at the interim performance review (usually at the midpoint of the rating cycle) and at the end of the rating cycle as part of your annual performance appraisal.   If a closeout appraisal is being completed, you will also be encouraged to submit a self assessment for that.   Although submitting a self assessment is voluntary, you are strongly encouraged to use this as an opportunity to communicate your significant accomplishments to your rating officials and, ultimately, to the pay pool officials who will be making decisions on your final rating of record and performance based pay out.

Your self assessment does not relieve your supervisor of the responsibility for writing an assessment of your contributions.  It does remind your supervisor of your significant accomplishments and can provide an opportunity for further discussion between you and you supervisor about your performance.

You will not be rated based on your writing skills.   However, you should take the time to ensure your self assessment is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors.   It is most important that your self assessment reflect the substance of what you accomplished during the rating period.

This guide will help you:

- Identify accomplishments which contributed to the achievement of your organization's mission and goals;
- Record those accomplishments in a systematic manner; and
- Write an assessment of your performance accomplishments which accurately reflects your contribution to the organization during the rating period.

# Getting Started

Before you begin to record your performance accomplishments, you must have a clear understanding of what your supervisor expects of you.   "Performance Expectations" include not only your written job objectives, but also other

regulations, policies, procedures, guidelines, processes and standards of conduct that you are expected to follow in performing your assignments. Be sure that you understand these expectations - *ask questions if you do not.*

In addition to your job objectives, review the Performance Indicators and Contributing Factors which apply to your job. Think about the Performance Indicators: What do you need to do to meet Level 3? What do you need to do to achieve Level 5? The Contributing Factors are listed with each of your job objectives. Think about how you can integrate these factors into your performance and reflect them in your self assessment, e.g., technical proficiency, customer focus, cooperation and team work, etc.

# Create a System to Record Accomplishments

This can be hard copy or electronic, depending on what works best for you.

Some suggestions include:

- E-mail Folder (keep separate folder for performance related items)
- Word Document, updated as needed
- Notes on Planner or Calendar
- File Folder(s) to maintain copies of documents

Establish a process for reviewing and recording your accomplishments on a regular basis, e.g., once a week. Make a note of significant items or put a copy into your file. Identify the objective which is linked to the accomplishment.

# What are Significant Accomplishments?

The following are characteristics of significant assignments:

- Difficult
- Controversial
- First time or one of a kind
- High visibility
- Large volume of work
- Short deadlines
- Competing priorities
- Require innovation
- Significant scope and impact

# What to Keep

It is not necessary to keep a running log of day to day work.  When you do something that is different, difficult or demanding in some way, that type of accomplishment should be recorded.  Make a note of any special challenges or difficulties you encountered and how you handled them.

Maintain a file of work products which meet the characteristics described above.  These could be copies of reports, studies, advisories, operating procedures, training materials or other documents you developed.

Maintain a log of statistical data and other metrics which apply to your work.  There may be an automated system for tracking productivity data for your organization, but you should also be aware of your personal productivity level and how you work compares with the standard.

Maintain copies of letters, memos or email correspondence which express thanks or praise for a service or product you provided.  Correspondence which documents your role in resolving a complex or controversial issue should be maintained.  Keep copies of appointments to special projects or teams.

# Writing Your Self Assessment

Your self assessment will be recorded in NSPS appraisal form located in the Performance Appraisal Application (PAA).  You will access the PAA through MyBiz.  Instructions for completing your self assessment are located at Completing Employee Activities in the PAA, starting on page 5.

Although your self assessment will be recorded in the PAA, it is a good practice to draft it  as an MS Word document and then paste it to the PAA.  Drafting the self assessment in a word document will make it easier for you to proof, edit, and check what you have written prior to putting it into the PAA.  Just be careful in doing this – the PAA will not accept some special characters that are available in MS Word.  So, even when you paste it into the PAA, check it again to ensure there are no errors.

You will have plenty of space in the PAA for your self assessment information.  For each objective, you are allowed up to 2,000 characters.  There is a lot of space, but remember to focus on what will be important to the officials who will be reviewing your self assessment.

# The "Do's" of Writing Self Assessments

- Begin by reviewing your objectives, performance indicators and contributing factors.

- Review your record of accomplishments and determine which are the most significant in terms of contribution to mission and organizational goals.

- Be sure that you have at least one accomplishment for each job objective.

- Use action verbs to describe what you did.

- Describe the results of your accomplishment.

- Describe the impact on mission or organizational goals.

- Note challenges you faced and how you met them.

- Describe how contributing factors were addressed.

- Be concise and specific—you are highlighting the significant contributions you made, not reporting on your daily work activities.

  **Example**: Objective #1 – Complete Special Projects. Keep leadership informed of progress and problems. Recommend solutions or alternative approaches. Coordinate with appropriate internal and external contacts to accomplish assignments.

  > I led the team which planned the annual regional directors' meeting. I negotiated with the hotel for a reduced room rate and free meeting room. I drafted the meeting agenda which was approved by the Director. I arranged for guest speakers and assigned sponsors for each of them. I reviewed all materials prior to printing to ensure accuracy and proper format and arranged for reproduction despite reduced funding and a shortened deadline. I was publicly recognized during the meeting and by a personal note from the Deputy Director for the outstanding administrative and logistical support provided by my team which contributed to the successful meeting.

- Be specific when writing self assessment statements—do not leave it to others to presume your contribution. For example, instead of stating: "I made six site visits during the rating period" state "I made six site visits which resulted in

better communications between our office and the field on the Keystone Project". **Or** "I developed a new review procedure which was adopted by our division and has reduced the amount of time required to process contracts."

- Describe what you did—not what was done by the entire team.

- Focus on results and impact on mission.


# The "Don'ts" of Writing Self-Assessments

- Don't use acronyms that others may not be familiar with. If you do use an acronym, spell it out first.

- Don't assume pay pool panel officials are familiar with your job. Explain the significance and impact of what you do.

- Don't make the self assessment so technical that it cannot be understood.

- Don't cite accomplishments that occurred in an earlier rating period.

- Don't include information without linking it to a specific objective.


# Summary

- The employee self assessment is a critical part of the NSPS Performance Appraisal System.

- It provides an opportunity for you to highlight your significant accomplishments in terms of your job objectives.

- It requires focusing on results, i.e., impact on organizational mission and goals.

- The substance of your self assessment is more important than your writing style.

- Your self assessment is reviewed by your rating officials and is considered in recommending your performance appraisal rating and share distribution to the pay pool panel.

**GUIDE TO WRITING SELF ASSESSMENTS**

- The self assessment also provides an opportunity for communication between you and your rating official on your performance, on his or her performance expectations and on recommendations for improving your self assessment for the next rating period.

# If you have questions about your writing your self assessment, contact your supervisor.

# Additional information on writing self assessments is located on the DoD NSPS website:

# NSPS CONNECT-EMPLOYEES

# Click Performance Management and scroll to Self Assessments to access links to resources and training.